

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 16, 20, 24, and 32 as follows.

1. - 15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) A method of increasing the shelf life of a blank photomask substrate coated with a chemically amplified photoresist, said method comprising:

selecting a chemically amplified photoresist comprising a modified phenolic polymer, and an onium salt-containing chemical amplifier;

coating a photomask substrate with said chemically amplified photoresist; and

post application baking said chemically amplified photoresist on said photomask substrate at a temperature ranging between about 85 ~~84~~ °C and about 115 ° C for a time period which provides stability of said baked blank photomask substrate while exposed to ambient atmosphere conditions in a clean room at room temperature, whereby after storage of said coated photomask substrate for a period of more than 2 hours, a difference in a subsequently generated photomask critical dimension feature is less than 20 nm compared with said feature generated immediately after application of said chemically amplified photoresist on said photomask substrate.

17. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with Claim 16, wherein said chemically amplified photoresist comprises a modified phenolic polymer in combination with a chemical amplifier including an onium salt metal halide complex.

18. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with Claim 16, wherein said post application baking time period at set point ranges from greater than one minute to about 9 minutes.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Currently Amended) A method of increasing the shelf life of a blank photomask substrate coated with a chemically amplified photoresist, said method comprising:

coating a photomask substrate with said chemically amplified photoresist; and

post application baking said chemically amplified photoresist on said photomask

substrate at a temperature ranging between about ~~85~~ 84 °C and about 115 ° C for a time period sufficient to ensure that after storage of said coated photomask substrate for a period of more than 2 hours, a difference in a subsequently generated photomask critical dimension feature is less than 20 nm compared with said feature generated immediately after application of said chemically amplified photoresist on said photomask substrate.

21. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with Claim 20, wherein said post application bake time period ranges from greater than one minute to about 9 minutes.

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with Claim 20, wherein said temperature ranges between about 105 °C and about 115°C.

24. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with Claim 20, wherein said period of storage of said coated photomask substrate prior to exposure to patterning radiation ranges ~~between from~~ from 2 hours ~~and 370 up to at least 365~~ up to at least 365 days, and said difference in said critical dimension feature is less than about 20 nm.

25. (Cancelled)

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Cancelled)

28. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with Claim 20, wherein said chemically amplified photoresist comprises a modified phenolic polymer.

29. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with Claim 28, wherein said post application bake time period ranges from greater than one minute to about 9 minutes.

30. (Cancelled)

31. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with Claim 28, wherein said bake temperature ranges between about 105 °C and about 115 °C.

32. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with Claim 28, wherein said period of storage of said coated photomask substrate prior to exposure to patterning radiation ranges between from 2 hours and 370 up to at least 365 days, and said difference in critical dimension feature is less than about 20 nm.

33. (Cancelled)

34. (Cancelled)

35. (Cancelled)